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Patentanmeldung Nr. Patent application No. Demande de brevet n°

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R C van Dijk



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Bezeichnung der Erfindung/Title of the invention/Titre de l'invention:
(Falls die Bezeichnung der Erfindung nicht angegeben ist, siehe Beschreibung.
If no title is shown please refer to the description.
Si aucun titre n'est indiqué se referer à la description.)

A beverage making device comprising a frothing member

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A beverage making device comprising a frothing member

The invention is related to a beverage making device comprising a frothing member for producing froth in the beverage. By means of the device a beverage can be made by an extraction process, for example to produce coffee, or by a dissolving process, for example to produce a chocolate drink.

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Such device is disclosed in EP-A-1092377, which publication describes a device for making coffee comprising a brewing chamber in which a pad containing ground coffee can be placed. The coffee is extracted by hot water supplied through holes in the upper wall of the brewing chamber. The hot water passes the pad and at the central part of the bottom of the brewing chamber the brewed beverage (coffee extract) is collected and it is injected into a frothing chamber through a nozzle in the bottom of the brewing chamber. Thereby the coffee extract is injected into the coffee extract that was entered before into the frothing chamber, so that air is mixed with the coffee extract and froth (foam) is created. Subsequently the frothed coffee extract is guided by outflow means to outside the device, where one or two cups to be filled with the frothed coffee extract are present. The coffee in the cups will have a froth layer on top.

As described in EP-A-1092377, the stability of the froth can be increased by creating fine-bubble froth (i.e. fine foam) without large air bubbles (i.e. a mono dispersed distribution of small bubble sizes). The larger air bubbles grow via Ostwald ripening and break up soon and thereby cause the entire froth layer to become unstable by broadening further the size distribution and by creating shock waves dissolve rapidly. However, it is difficult to avoid the creation of larger air bubbles (i.e. coarse foam) in the froth. Even when the amount of larger air bubbles is minimized, a small quantity of large air bubbles in the froth layer on the coffee may result in a rapid disappearance of the entire froth layer.

The object of the invention is to provide for a stable froth layer on the beverage produced by the beverage making device by avoiding larger air bubbles in the froth layer.

To accomplish that object, the device comprises a settling chamber for settling 5 the frothed beverage coming from the frothing member, whereby the outlet for the settled beverage is at the lower side of said settling chamber. When the frothed beverage is buffered for some time in the settling chamber, the larger air bubbles will move in upward direction with respect to the smaller air bubbles, so that the coarse foam comes to rest above the fine foam. Because the outlet of the settling chamber is located at the lower side, i.e. at the bottom 10 of the settling chamber, the coarse foam will stay behind in the settling chamber until all coffee extract, including the fine foam, has left the settling chamber. By that time the largest air bubbles will be dissolved.

In one preferred embodiment the device comprises a brewing chamber for brewing the beverage, means for supplying hot water into said brewing chamber, and nozzle 15 means to supply the brewed beverage to the frothing member, as described above. Thereby the nozzle means may inject the beverage into the frothing member, so that froth is created by the turbulence, whereby air is mixed with the beverage.

It is important that the beverage in the settling chamber comes to a relative rest. Such rest can be achieved by waiting some time, but preferably the rest is the result of 20 the way of supplying the frothed beverage into the settling chamber. Thereby, preferably, the inlet for supplying the frothed beverage into the settling chamber is located near the expected upper surface of the beverage in the settling chamber, so that the inflow of the beverage does not cause heavy turbulence.

In one preferred embodiment the frothed beverage is guided in the settling 25 chamber along a guiding surface. Such guiding surface avoids much turbulence when the incoming beverage comes into contact with the beverage that is already present in the settling chamber. The guiding surface may be a located in the central part of the settling chamber and is preferably a substantial horizontal surface, which surface is preferably located just above the expected upper surface of the beverage in the settling chamber. Thereby the frothed 30 beverage may enter the settling chamber though a central inlet in the upper wall of the settling chamber, which is an advantageous location when the settling chamber is located underneath the frothing member.

In another preferred embodiment the guiding surface is a portion of the surface of the side wall of the settling chamber. Thereby the inlet for supplying the frothed beverage

into the settling chamber may direct its outflow against the side wall of the settling chamber, so that the beverage flows along the surface of the side wall to the beverage that is already present in the settling chamber.

Preferably, the outlet of the settling chamber has an opening of less than 4 mm², preferably an opening of less than 2 mm². The restriction in the outlet of the settling chamber has two functions. Firstly it increases the time that the beverage remains in the settling chamber, and secondly it avoids that the largest air bubbles can pass the outlet. Preferably the outlet has a substantial round opening.

Outflow means may extend outside the device in order to guide the beverage to one or two cups. Thereby the outflow means guide the beverage from the frothing member over a certain distance to the outflow opening outside the device and the settling chamber may form an integral part of said outflow means.

In one preferred embodiment a part of the device can be removed from the remainder of the device, said part comprising the frothing member, the settling chamber, and the outflow means for guiding the beverage to outside the device.

The invention also relates to a method for making a beverage by means of a beverage making device comprising a frothing member for producing froth in the beverage, whereby the frothed beverage is guided into a settling chamber for settling the frothed beverage, and whereby the settled beverage is guided out of the settling chamber through an outlet at the lower side of the settling chamber.

The invention will now be further explained by means of a description of an embodiment of a device for making coffee, in which reference is made to the drawing comprising a figure that shows a sectional view of a portion of the device.

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The figure shows the relevant part (i.e. the uppermost portion) of a device for making coffee. The other part of the device, which is not shown, comprises a water container and means for heating the water and pumping a predetermined quantity of the heated water through tube 2 to a number of holes 3 in the upper wall 4 of a brewing chamber 5. In the sectional view of the figure only one hole 3 in the upper wall 4 is shown, but there are more holes, spread out over the surface of the upper wall 4.

Brewing chamber 5 has a substantial cylindrical shape and a disc-like pad (not shown) containing for example ground coffee fits in it. The coffee is extracted by supplying the hot water under pressure through the holes 3, so that the water passes said disk-like pad.

The lower wall 6 of the brewing chamber 5 is provided with a profile 7 to form canals for allowing the brewed coffee to arrive at the central part of the bottom of the brewing chamber 5, where outflow means, in the form of nozzle 8, are located. Nozzle 8 is attached to the lower wall 6 by a screw thread. The coffee extract passes nozzle 8 and
5 because of the relatively high liquid pressure in the brewing chamber 5, the nozzle 8 causes a liquid jet in downward direction, into a frothing chamber 9.

Frothing chamber 9 is provided with a central horizontal plateau 10. The liquid jet coming from the nozzle 8 strikes against the plateau 10, so that the coffee extract is splashed against the side wall of the frothing chamber 9. Thereby the coffee extract is mixed
10 with air and in the turbulence air bubbles are created in the coffee extract. Subsequently the coffee extract, including the air bubbles, flows to a settling chamber 11, where the coffee extract comes to rest, so that the larger air bubbles will rise relative to the smaller air bubbles.

The coffee extract is supplied from the frothing chamber 9 to the settling chamber 11 through an inlet 12. The outflow opening of inlet 12 is located near a horizontal guiding surface 13 in the central part of the settling chamber 11. The level of the guiding surface 13 is a little higher than the expected highest level of the coffee extract in the settling chamber 11, so that the guiding surface 13 will guide the coffee extract from said opening of inlet 12 to the coffee extract that is already in the settling chamber, without causing turbulence in the coffee extract.
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In stead of the horizontal guiding surface 13, the inlet of the settling chamber can direct to incoming frothed coffee extract against a side wall or another wall of the settling chamber. Anyway, it has turned out that turbulence in the settling chamber can be avoided by making use of a guiding surface for guiding the coffee extract into the liquid in the settling chamber.
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It has appeared that – within short time – inside the settling chamber 11 the foam in the coffee extract will separate into fine foam in the lower part of the settling chamber 11 and coarse foam on top of the fine foam. The outlet 14 of the settling chamber 11 is located at the lower side of that chamber, so that the coffee extract with the fine foam (i.e. the small air bubbles) will flow through it, while the coarse foam (i.e. the larger air bubbles)
30 will remain in the settling chamber. In practice it has turned out that the coarse foam will not pass the outlet 14, because the major part of it is disappeared before the settling chamber 11 is empty, and the remainder of the coarse foam disappears when it tries to pass the outlet opening 14.

The diameter of the outlet opening 14 is limited to form a restriction, so that the coffee extract is buffered for a short time in the settling chamber 11. After passing the outlet opening 14, the coffee extract with the fine foam flows through outflow means 15 to outside the device, where it can be caught by a cup (not shown). In the cup a foam layer of relatively fine air bubbles will be on top of the coffee extract.

5 The embodiment as described above is only an example; a great many other embodiments are possible.

CLAIMS:

1. A beverage making device comprising a frothing member (9) for producing froth in the beverage, characterized in that the device comprise a settling chamber (11) for settling the frothed beverage coming from the frothing member (9), and in that the outlet (14) for the settled beverage is at the lower side of the settling chamber (11).

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2. A beverage making device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the device comprises a brewing chamber (5) for brewing the beverage, means for supplying hot water into said brewing chamber (5), and outflow means to supply the brewed beverage to the frothing member (9).

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3. A beverage making device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the beverage is injected into the frothing member (9).

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4. A beverage making device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the inlet (12) for supplying the frothed beverage into the settling chamber (11) is located near the expected upper surface of the beverage in the settling chamber (11).

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5. A beverage making device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the frothed beverage is guided in the settling chamber (11) along a guiding surface (13).

6. A beverage making device as claimed in claim 5, characterized in that the guiding surface (13) is located in the central part of the settling chamber (11) and is preferably a substantial horizontal surface.

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7. A beverage making device as claimed in claim 5, characterized in that the guiding surface is a portion of the surface of the side wall of the settling chamber (11).

8. A beverage making device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that said outlet (14) has an opening of less than 4 mm², preferably an opening of less than 2 mm².

5 9. A beverage making device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that said outlet (14) has a substantial round opening.

10. 10. A beverage making device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a part of the device can be removed from the remainder of the device, 10 said part comprising the frothing member (9), the settling chamber (11), and outflow means (15) for guiding the beverage to outside the device.

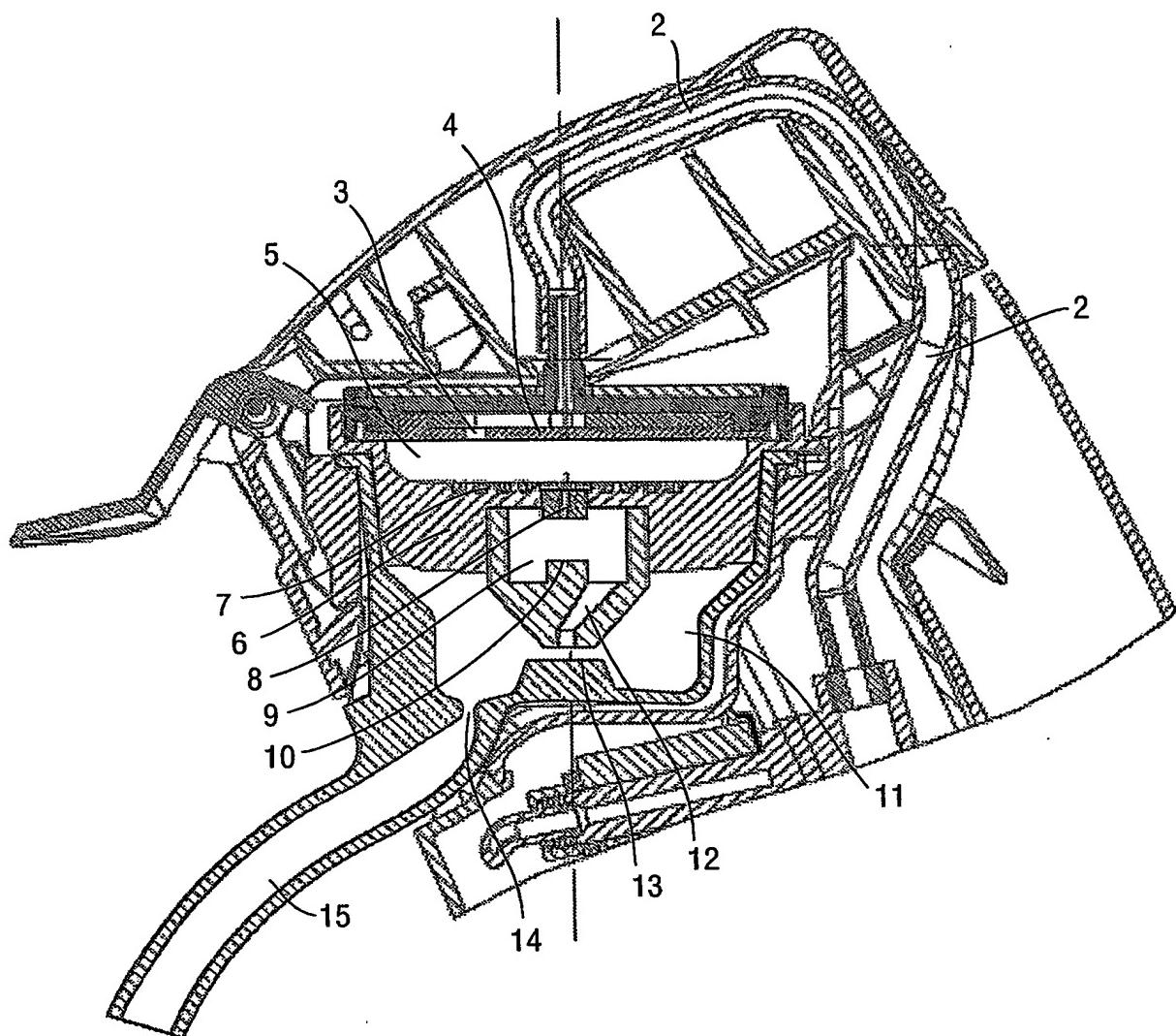
11. 11. A method for making a beverage by means of a beverage making device comprising a frothing member (9) for producing froth in the beverage, characterized in that 15 the frothed beverage is guided into a settling chamber (11) for settling the frothed beverage, and in that the settled beverage is guided out of the settling chamber (11) through an outlet (14) at the lower side of the settling chamber (11).

ABSTRACT:

A beverage making device comprising a frothing member (9) for producing froth in the beverage, whereby the device comprises a settling chamber (11) for settling the frothed beverage coming from the frothing member (9). Thereby the coarse foam is separated from the fine foam. The outlet (14) for the settled beverage is at the lower side of the settling chamber (11).

5 Sole fig.

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